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Feudal System of Pakistan in Daniyal Mueenuddin's Short Stories: A Marxist Critique

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses the short stories of the Pakistani-American author Daniyal Mueenuddin, in his collection, "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders" (Mueenuddin, 2009). The theoretical foundation of this study draws mainly from *The Communist Manifesto* written by the German philosophers Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (Marx, Engels, & Taylor, 1967). The study highlights the Feudal System in Punjab- Pakistan, given in Mueenuddin's stories as representative of the same stratification and class struggles, discussed by Marx and Engels for the capitalist society. The Bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie and proletariat classes of Capitalism given in the Manifesto are traced in the Feudal set up of the stories to expose the workings of the feudal system of Pakistan. The study is supported by views on Pakistani feudalism by various intellectuals both from the West and East and the presentation of feudalism by Mueenuddin is weighed and analysed accordingly. Finally, in keeping with the Marxist point of view, the role of the author is explicated in highlighting and addressing the injustices in feudal system of Pakistan. This study is undertaken with a hope of highlighting the feudal system of Pakistan which is although slowly receding in Pakistan but still has a strong hold in the rural areas. "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders" is one of the very few books on feudalism in Pakistan, especially in the literary arena. A need for authoring more such texts on Pakistani feudalism is expressed through this study, to create awareness and to present possible solutions for this system of unjust agrarian hierarchy.

Keywords: feudalism, Pakistan, Marxism, stratification, oppression

Introduction

Pakistan is an agricultural country with an approximate 63% of the entire about 200 million population living in the villages (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2018). The agricultural lands are owned by Feudal lords who run them with the

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help of their managers and accountants. The roots of feudalism in Pakistan are found in the British colonial rule on the subcontinent traced by Natasha Shahid and she explains how the “Mansabdari System” for land management, quite just in its disposition, introduced by the Mughal rulers became the “Mahalwari System” i.e. the present day form of feudal system in Pakistan empowering a few landowning families (The Friday Times, 2015).

The German philosophers and thinkers Karl Marx and Engels wrote *The Communist Manifesto* and other political pieces about the evils of capitalism, discussing its inevitable downfall and the evolution of a better economic system in the form of socialism resulting from a revolution through the lower class. Feudalism was replaced by capitalism in England in the 15th Century, “By the fifteenth century, peasant communities in England had effectively put an end to the lords' capacity to extract an economic surplus in the form of feudal rents” (Katz, 1993). Acknowledging the transition of Feudalism into Capitalism and the continuing class struggles, Marx and Engels, wrote in *The Communist Manifesto*, “The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms” (Marx et al., 1967).

In Pakistan, the system of government is democratic and in the rural areas, feudal system is still very strong with most of the political leaders themselves being feudal lords. 80 per cent of the elected representatives in Punjab are feudal lords, 90 per cent in Sindh (Pakistan Today, 2016). Observing the same capitalist tendencies as denounced by Marx and Engels, in the Pakistani feudal culture, Marxist critique is applied on the short stories of Mueenuddin. Marx has delineated different classes of the capitalist society. The upper class is called bourgeoisie by Marx, middle class is petty bourgeoisie and the lower class is proletariats.

All these social classes are present in the feudal system of Pakistan showing it to be similar to the capitalist society denounced by Marx and Engels. This will be further elaborated and analysed in the discussion section. To discuss the bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie and proletariat classes of the feudal system, they will be referred to as Feudal Bourgeoisie, Feudal Petty Bourgeoisie and Feudal Proletariats.

Research Questions

This research will function under the following research questions,

1. Who are the Feudal Bourgeois, Feudal Petty Bourgeois and Faudal Proletariats in the feudal system portrayed in Mueenuddin's stories, making it similar to Marxist capitalist system?
2. In what ways the Feudal Bourgeois/Petty bourgeois oppress the Feudal Proletariats in Mueenuddin's stories?
3. To what extent or how far a socio economic revolution which is integral to Marx and Engels philosophy, suggested by Mueenuddin?
4. How far Mueenuddin's portrayal of feudal society true to representation of Pakistani feudalism in media and other research?

Literature Review

Published in 2009, Mueenuddin's collection of short stories has won much critical acclaim. "Mr. Mueenuddin's eight linked stories, which take place in Pakistan in the 1970s, '80s and '90s, offer readers a look inside a culture that is in the headlines. It is the voice of Pakistan from within Pakistan, a fresh perspective rival publishers say should give the book an edge" (WSJ, 2009).

Not a lot of critical work has been done on Mueenuddin's stories with a few exceptions which include Hai (2014) and Sadaf (2014). Even in these works the approach towards the stories is quite different from the one taken up in the present study. Hai's work (2014) focusses on the role of servants in the stories. Her concern is with the domestic servants taking the centre stage in Mueenuddin's stories in contrast to the protagonists of most other authors who enjoy more eminent social positions (Hai, 2014). The servant protagonists of Mueenuddin are important in the present study also but their servitude is not the focus here instead they are seen through the Marxist lens of interpretation. Sadaf has taken an altogether different perspective of the stories and talks about the death of Pakistani masculinity shown by Mueenuddin through his "unfulfilled, aging or dying men" (Sadaf, 2014: 490). Both these studies employ unique ways of reading Mueenuddin's stories and provide valuable critical insight. The present study stands apart in its application of Marxist criticism to the stories.

In contrast to the dearth of critical work done on Mueenuddin's stories, the aspects and problems of overall Pakistani feudalism have been part of much intellectual debate. Khan, Dasti and Khan highlight the impediments to progress of country due to feudalism (Khan, Dasti, & Khan, 2013) and Shuja explains the feudal mentality in detail. These being notable among such studies.

The present study takes Marxist ideas and applies them to the feudal system of Pakistan as portrayed through Mueenuddin's short stories. The way the paper will progress is further elaborated in the methodology section.

Research Methodology

Marxist theory drawn primarily from *The Communist Manifesto* (Marx et al., 1967) of Karl Marx, considered as the basis of Marxist criticism serves as the theoretical framework for the present study. Marxist critique has been selected as appropriate, for highlighting the class stratification embedded in the feudal system and the exploitation of the lower class (proletariats) by the upper classes (bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie) owing to the similarity between the capitalist classes denounced by Marx and the feudal system of Pakistan. Marxism attempts to reveal the ways in which our socioeconomic system is the ultimate source of our experience" (Tyson, 2014). The sample is Daniyal Mueenuddin's three short stories titled 'Saleema', 'Provide, provide' and 'In Other Rooms, Other Wonders' (title also used for the collection) (Mueenuddin, 2009). The selection of the stories was made on the basis of their setting being feudal as representative of feudal system of Pakistan, also the selected stories are more descriptively rich and lengthy.

The approach used to analyse the data is critical content analysis. Content analysis is a flexible research method used to analyze texts and to describe and interpret the written

artifacts of a society (White & Marsh, 2006). A further classification Content Analysis is Critical Content Analysis where the use of the word Critical is explained by Short (2016) as containing a, “stance of locating power in social practices in order to challenge conditions of inequity” (Short, 2016). Taking up Critical content Analysis as the methodology, this research will study the power relations (mainly oppression and resistance) imbuing the feudal system portrayed by Mueenuddin from a Marxist Critical lens. As Marxism is also concerned with the power relations between different social classes, critical content analysis is a justified approach for this study. Some known studies applying critical content analysis to literature include Bishop (1982) and Taxel (1986) as well as recent work by McGillis (2000) and Bradford (2007). Data is codified according to the Marxist divisions and classifications. Analysing the data, commonly emerging patterns of exploitation and power relations between different classes are highlighted and discussed.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Based on Marxist criticism the characters are coded as belonging to the three Marxist classes. These include the bourgeois class as, "the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage labour". (Marx & Engels, 1848: 14) and the Petty bourgeoisie standing between the bourgeoisie and proletariat as, "In countries where modern civilisation has become fully developed, a new class of petty bourgeois has been formed" (Marx et al., 1967). Petty Bourgeoisie in modern capitalist society applies also to a section of employed persons involved in superintendence and the lower levels of management. These employees have a supervisory role, “who, while the work is being done, command in the name of the capitalist”. Finally, the poor class or the working class is called the Proletariats. Marxists define the proletariat or working class as, "...that class of modern wage labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live (Marx et al., 1967). The applicability of these classes outlined by Marx, on the feudal system portrayed by Mueenuddin is explored here.

Feudal Bourgeoisie in Selected Stories

The upper class, owners of the means of production and the employers, are mostly the Feudal landlords in the stories. All stories in Mueenuddin’s collection are mildly inter-related. The main connection is K.K. Harouni the rich landlord, who owns thousands of acres of land near the Indus River. Harouni and his family consists of three daughters Sarwat (married to a very rich industrialist, living in Karachi), Kamila (living in New York) and Rehana (living in Paris) and one son Sohail Harouni, about whom the writer says, “Sohail Harouni was a handsome cheerful man with never a care in his life, who enjoyed giving parties more than anything else,” (218) are the Feudal bourgeoisie class in the text. They are extremely affluent with K.K. Harouni being, “accustomed to having almost unlimited amounts of money.” (52) There are other characters like Makhdoom Talwan, “the dominant landlord and politician in the district” (82) who make up the upper class but do not figure very prominently in the stories. Harouni is the one around whom all of the stories revolve and all the characters, in one way or other are related to him.

Feudal Petty Bourgeoisie in Selected Stories

The Petty Bourgeoisie, involved in supervision of the proletariats are also present in Mueenuddin's feudal world. In the Harouni household Chaudhry Nabi Baksh Jaglini- the Manager of Harouni estate is the main petty bourgeoisie character. As Harouni, "spent increasingly less time at his family estate in southern Punjab, relying instead upon his manager, the formidable Chaudrey Nabi Baksh Jaglini...Chaudrey Sahib grew paramount in Dunyapur, the place along the Indus where the Harouni farms lay." (50)

Rafik, Harouni's personal valet and Hassan the cook can also be read as part of the feudal petty bourgeoisie owing to the elevated status they enjoy as compared to other workers. As when Harouni dies only Rafik and Hassan are kept in service and all of the other servants are discharged. Also Hassan is important as he, "ruled the filthy hot kitchen. He made food both for the master's table and for all the servants, more than a dozen of them." (19) Rafik on the other hand is the special servant who takes care of all of Harouni's needs when he gets old. Due to this position, "All of old Lahore knew Rafik, the barons, the landlords and magnates and politicians, the old dragons, the hostesses of forty years old." (22)

Some other characters from the selected stories are part of Feudal Petty Bourgeoisie but they do not have any consequential roles so are not discussed here.

Feudal Proletariats in Selected Stories

In 'Saleema' the central character, Saleema is born in a family of black mailers and bootleggers who "was brought up with slaps and harsh words" and "had nothing" (35) as they were extremely poor. She is a part of the Feudal Proletariats. In 'Provide, Provide' Aslam, the peasant husband of Zainab is another feudal proletariat. Though he is a minor character, he has an important role in the power relations in the story, 'Provide, Provide.' Zainab, first the wife of Aslam and then Jaglini's wife is also a feudal proletariat character. Finally the educated maid, Husna, mistress of K.K.Harouni is the proletariat in the story, 'In Other Rooms, Other Wonders.'

Oppression of the Feudal Proletariats by the Feudal Bourgeoisie and Petty Bourgeoisie

Karl Marx has repeatedly referred to the Proletariats as the oppressed class by the bourgeoisie. He speaks of proletariats as "the exploited and oppressed class" and the need for their emancipation, "from the class which exploits and oppresses it (the bourgeoisie)" (Marx et al., 1967). Upon careful analysis the pattern of oppression staged out by upper classes on the lower classes becomes evident as told by Marx for the Capitalist society, being equally applicable on Feudal system of Pakistan. Although Marx having universal ambitions from his Communist Manifesto doesn't differentiate between oppression of men and women but this classification is done here in the characters for clarity in the discussion.

Oppressed Feudal Proletariat Men

Although most of the cases of oppression shown by Mueenuddin are targeted towards the proletariat females (females being the protagonists in these stories) but there are a few instances where even the feudal proletariat men are shown to succumb to the upper class. In the story, Saleema, the extent of their oppression is seen as when Harouni sees Rafik and Saleema's son for the first time, Rafik says, "What can I say, Hazoor... These are all Your Honor's blessings." (42) Attributing the son to the blessings of Harouni and not to the Creator is against Rafik's religious teachings, but he does so to show his gratitude to his landlord master. The way the Bourgeoisie landlord Harouni is positioned in God's place by Rafik, clearly indicates the mental subjugation of the feudal lower classes.

Also in "Provide, Provide," Jaglini forcefully takes Zainab from her husband, Aslam exercising his power and authority. Being obsessed with Zainab, he forces Aslam to divorce Zainab so that he could marry her. Realizing his low status and from fear of consequences, Aslam signs the divorce papers.

Oppressed Feudal Proletariat Women

Talking about the stronghold of feudal lords sociologist, Shaukat Qadir tells Al Jazeera correspondent Mustafa, "Consequently, their desire to do away with this [system] is very limited, and their primitive beliefs of dominance, such as suppression of women, continue to exist" (Pakistan's fight against feudalism, 2014). Mueenuddin's stories also focus on the female oppression as they are the more subjugated ones, even in the proletariats. "His writings help the reader to understand that women are considered as property and are not considered worthy of the respect that their male counterparts receive" (Pervez, 2012). Saleema is kept in the Harouni household for Begum Kamila's (daughter of Harouni) assistance and care but, "haughty and proud, Kamila allowed no intimacies" (20). This characteristic of keeping their distance from the proletariats, is common in the feudal temperament. Also in the story, 'In Other Rooms, Other Wonders' Husna becomes the mistress of K.K. Harouni. She cares for him, feeds him and gives him company in his old age, when his own family is not there. But after his death, she is quite indifferently dismissed by his daughters. Explaining the attitude of the daughters as, "They had closed up against her—family, blood." (129)

The most commonly occurring pattern of oppression of the feudal proletariat women is through sexual exploitation. In the story, 'Saleema' we are told that in Saleema's childhood, "her father became a heroin addict, and died of it, her mother slept around for money and favours, and herself at fourteen became the plaything of a small landowner's son." (17) Such description shows the hard childhood she has and the entire story, with very brief sparks of hope, brings no bright fortune for her. She works as a maidservant in the "Lahore mansion of the landlord K.K. Harouni," (18) and has "opened her legs for the cook," (18) Hassan. It seems that physical favours are a norm in the feudal world portrayed by Mueenuddin, and maid-servants are expected to give physical pleasures to their masters as part of their job. Such is their poverty that the feudal proletariat women have no other choice. As Saleema's outburst on her character assassination tells us, "You think I'm a slut, you think I poison my husband. Because of him I'm alone and you all do with me as you like" (22).

Saleema knows that in order to survive in the Harouni estate she has to become someone's mistress for protection. After the cook tires of her she befriends the valet, Rafik. Although she makes the first move but Rafik after exploiting her and having a son from her leaves her in the end in favour of his first wife and family. Hassan tells her of this in these words, "It's over. There never *was* any hope." (48)

In 'Provide, Provide' the same physical exploitation is faced by Zainab at the hands of Harouni's manager Jaglini. Zainab, the sister of the driver, Mustafa is introduced in Jaglini's house as a maid. From cooking food for Jaglini to massaging his feet and then finally sleeping with him, Zainab is shown slowly giving in to Jaglini's advances. But she doesn't love him till the end of the story and mechanically follows his orders and desires, even during physical intimacy at night, "he found no response in her eyes, except a willingness to serve him." (59) Also, "he found that after two months she still had not come any closer. She needed him, he knew that..." (59)

The sexual exploitation of the proletariat females by the bourgeois and petty bourgeois men is not resisted by the females. They silently comply with their masters wishes showing the extent of their psychological conditioning. "Mr. Mueenuddin unveils a nuanced world where social status and expectations are understood without being stated, and where poverty and the desire to advance frame each critical choice" (WSJ, 2009).

In all three stories, the second wife, Zainab, and the mistresses Saleema and Husna live in constant fear. They are afraid that all the love and security they find from the men they live with, will be taken away if their wives find out or if the situation changes. They are psychologically afraid and oppressed and in each story, these women's fears come true. When Jaglini the doting husband of Zainab is diagnosed with cancer, his attitude changes and he regrets marrying Zainab. As he regrets having given, "his sons a stepmother of that class, a servant woman." (75) He refuses to meet her on his death bed and there are clear indications that his son's daughter that he has given to Zainab (after being unable to have children with her) will also be taken away from Zainab after Jaglini's death.

In the same way, Rafik also undergoes change after visiting his wife and children. "When he returned to Lahore he had changed. He had told his wife about little Allah Baksh." (43) Allah Baksh is Saleema and Rafik's son. Husna is also constantly afraid of Harouni's wife even though the wife lives separately. This pattern as shown, is found in all three stories manifesting the psychological oppression of the feudal proletariats at the hands of the feudal bourgeoisie, keeping in line with Marxist philosophy.

As explained earlier the Feudal Bourgeoisie, K.K. Harouni and his family are extremely rich but contrasted to their wealth is the poverty of their servants, especially the maids etc. Where the landlords are practically swimming in money the servants use, "Chipped cups- the servants' crockery," (23) Saleema, "shared the same toilet as the men" as "she didn't even have a place to herself for that" (20). Describing the toilet it is written, "The dark room stank, there were cockroaches in the corners" (20). When Husna is asked to leave the Harouni estate after Harouni's death, the daughters assume that she is asking for some share in the estate left behind by Harouni. And Sarwat says to her, "There was and is nothing for you" (128). Also Jaglini after falling terminally ill denounces Zainab. On their last meeting he says to her before leaving, "I've told the boys to give you something after I'm gone" (79) but, "Both of them knew this meant nothing" (79).

Thus the feudal proletariats shown by Mueenuddin, are oppressed by the feudal bourgeois in the same way as discussed by Marx for the Capitalist society.

Socio-Economic Revolution/ Solution

Marxist philosophy echoes of revolution through the proletariats and an inevitable overthrow of the bourgeoisie hegemony. “What the bourgeoisie...produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable” (Marx et al., 1967) and “Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win” (Marx et al., 1967). As evident from these words, Karl Marx and Engels envisioned an uprising of the proletariats of the world to topple the supremacy of the bourgeoisie. Although Engels became disillusioned by the prospect later on but this resistance and rebellion as the solution for emancipation for the oppressed condition of the proletariats is central to Marxist philosophy and consequently to its relevant critical application.

The prospect of betterment of the feudal proletariats is not given much scope by Mueenuddin. Even though the feudal proletariats, in the stories, try to improve their lives but, are shown to be doomed. They cannot escape the deplorable socio- economic condition to which they are born. Thus Mueenuddin is found to present a bleak picture for the lower classes. In the three stories under focus, the central proletariat characters meet disappointing ends. Their fortunes rise and fall in the stories but a final blow plunges them into the abyss of desperation and destitute.

After Rafik leaves Saleema to live with his first wife and children, at the end of the story Saleema’s destruction through drug abuse is given as, “Within two years she was finished” She even loses her job and starts begging holding her baby. “She cradled the little boy in her arms, holding him to the windows of cars” and then, “soon enough, she died, and the boy begged in the streets, one of the sparrows of Lahore.” (48-9) After quite a detailed story Saleema’s dismal aftermath is revealed in a single short paragraph. Suddenly the description of the character becomes minimalistic. The slow descriptive pace of the story becomes very fast in the last paragraph, with years passing in a few sentences as if what is happening is inevitable and cannot be undone. This presentation, although is thought provoking, yet speaks of the writer’s conviction about the hopeless condition of the feudal proletariats.

Zainab’s fortune also takes a turn for the worst with the death of her husband. He was her only protection, financially and physically. When Jaglini is about to die and his sons from the first wife, “decided to divide the property equally. They also agreed to prevent their father from making any other disposition.” (80) This *other disposition* being for Zainab. Jaglini’s family doesn’t even let her meet the dying man and Jaglini having denounced her has no desire to meet her either. She is pushed out of the house and she leaves, crying and “kept saying to herself, ‘And they didn’t even offer me a cup of tea.’”(82) This *cup of tea* being some kind of acknowledgment of her relation with Jaglini, being a form of solace for the grieving woman who has nothing left anymore. The story doesn’t end here and continues with the political career of Jaglini’s son but there no mention of Zainab anymore. Her story ends with the death of Jaglini and there is no struggle on her part to change her fortune.

Husna in the third story under consideration is shown to follow a similar pattern. After Harouni's death she is thrown out of the estate where she enjoyed a considerable status as mistress of the landlord Harouni. The harsh words of the Harouni daughters aggravate the already grieving Husna. As Kamila says, "Look, whatever you had with my father is gone now. If you took care of him in these past months you were rewarded." (128) At this there is a glimpse of resistance in Husna as, "Husna stood. She had reached the bottom, and her pride arose, her sense of wanting to be dignified, to accept the inevitable." (129) just as she was about to leave the room Rehana (Harouni's daughter) calls to her and offers her to take her trunks and whatever is inside them, with her when leaving the house. Husna wanted to refuse flatly for the insult. As her perturbed thoughts are given by the writer, "She should have said something cold, should have refused their last insulting offer. 'For him I should have said, 'I came with nothing, I leave with nothing....I served your father, when you were far away. The shame be on your heads.'" (129) But this momentary resistance is eclipsed right there and then. As we read the next, final sentences of the story, "but she could not afford even this gesture. The next day two men loaded the trunks onto a horse drawn cart and carried them to the Old City." (129)

It is true that Mueenuddin evokes empathy for the lower class characters but perhaps, his realistic portrayal hinders him from taking an optimistic stance. He doesn't give any hope to the reader and the stories end in tragedy and gloom painting a bleak picture of life of the proletariats in feudal system with no option for escape.

Feudal System of Pakistan

Although Mueenuddin is credited for exposing side of Pakistan not given much room in literary representation yet his presentation is found to be subjective and partial. The media's take on the feudal system of Pakistan is quite blatant and severe as there are statements such as "Landlords are beneficiaries of a broken system that exploits the poor and empowers the rich," (Pakistan's fight against feudalism, 2018) "Feudalism is driven by principles of individualism, oppression, bondage, slavery," ("Feudal Lords continue to dominate the 'democratic' system | Pakistan Today, 2016), "The nation's few large landholding families wield substantial power locally and nationally" (Lancaster, 2003), Pakistan "need(s) a good dose of land reform to break up feudal power. The extraordinary inequities in Pakistan seem not only unjust but also an impediment to both economic growth and national consensus" (Kristof, 2009). "The feudal prototype in Pakistan consists of landlords with large joint families possessing hundreds or even thousands of acres of land. They seldom make any direct contribution to agricultural production. Instead, all work is done by peasants or tenants who live at subsistence level" (Shuja, 2000) and "Landowners have run the country since it was born. They monopolise its agriculture, sit in its parliament and feed on its resources. They are hereditary princes without pedigree, barons without class, capitalists without enterprise and — as their long romance with politics has now proven — statesmen without vision" (Khan et al., 2013). In the face of such criticism, Mueenduddin's portrayal of the feudal ruling class is mild and forgiving.

The central feudal character, Harouni is shown to be a compassionate and understanding person. His relation with Husna stemming out of loneliness also holds true

love for her. He is even shown to protect Husna in his conversation with Sarwat, his daughter, as she complains, “I can imagine keeping her around but to sit and have lunch with her, that’s too much.” (118) to which Harouni replies, “She comes from a good family,” “her great grandfather owned more land than yours. But, for a few twists of fate she might be in your place, and we might be still living in the Old City.”(118) Sarwat is not convinced but Harouni is shown positively. Not leaving Husna any money or security still reflects badly on him but in the time Husna was with him he is shown to be gentle, loving and kind. Same pattern is present in Rafik-Saleema relationship. He even gives her money to have the baby. He supports her and the baby throughout and sends her money even after leaving her. It is shown in the end of the story that Saleema’s destruction is at her own hands thorough drug addiction and lack of ability. Zainab is also treated by Jaglini very well. He even goes as much to marry her and announce their marriage publically, not worrying about the damage it could do to his political repute. In Mueenuddin’s portrayal, in the case of Harouni and Jaglini, death appears to be the main villain and for Rafik the death of his master Harouni. Harouni is also shown to be swindled by his workers frequently making the reader feel almost sorry for the naive trusting landlord.

In the media, news of cruel feudal lords/ managers appears frequently, as the one in Al Jazeera about the manager throwing serf’s son into the wheat thresher on a petty quarrel (Pakistan’s fight against feudalism, 2018). Also there are many drama serials based on true events exposing the harshness, insensitivity and cruelty of the feudal bourgeois. In the light of such presentation of feudal culture by the media, Mueenuddin’s account seems partial. One reason could be he himself hails from the feudal class, “The author lives on a medium-sized farm in Pakistan’s southern Punjab” (Tales From a Punjab Mango Farm - WSJ, 2018). About his writing he says, “Mr. Mueenuddin doesn’t “research” his books. Rather, he says, they are mostly based on personal experience.” Also in Mueenuddin’s stories class system is limited to the rural areas. Social stratification exists equally in the urban life as in the rural life. This being an aspect neglected by the author.

Thus Marxist critique applied to Mueenuddin’s stories exposes patterns in terms of class division and oppression. However, as far as the reality of feudalism and Mueenuddin’s depiction is concerned there seems to be some subjective mildness in his approach. The power dynamics resulting from the oppression as the means of remaining in control by the feudal class are also shown in this study. This research is undertaken with the hope of bringing to light the importance of literary texts dealing with feudalism and to entreat more writers to take up the subject through literary presentation. Application of Marxist criticism on the stories reveals the presence of a hierarchical system in the rural areas of Punjab. It is a system giving unquestioned authority and control to the feudal landlords (feudal bourgeoisie) and the condition of the serfs (feudal proletariats) is deplorable. The study also shows that the agrarian sector of Pakistan is no different from the stratified Capitalist Society censured by Marx and Engles. There is need to emancipate the feudal proletariats as the need was felt by Marx for the deliverance of proletariats in the capitalist system and this need can be fulfilled by objective representation of the true face of Pakistani feudalism in the literary arena.

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